

FY 2022 CONGRESSIONAL HEARING FACT SHEET

OCEAN DISPOSAL NEAR MONTROSE SUPERFUND SITE'S PALOS VERDES SHELF

BACKGROUND:

- On October 25, 2020, the Los Angeles Times published an article regarding the deep-water ocean disposal of DDT waste by Montrose Chemical Corp. of California (Montrose) adjacent to the Palos Verdes Shelf operable unit of the Montrose Superfund Site. This generated heavy public interest and a call for EPA to address it as part of our Montrose Superfund cleanup work (see separate Montrose Fact Sheet).
- From the 1930's until the early 1970's, disposal of domestic, industrial, and military waste was permitted at fourteen deep-water locations off the coast of Southern California. Historical records show that Montrose disposed of DDT-containing waste at several of these disposal sites in the 1950's and early 1960's.
- The EPA Superfund work at Palos Verdes Shelf (PV Shelf) site, on the other hand, involves the near-shore underwater area (at up to 200 feet depth) that became contaminated through chemical runoff from the Montrose plant into the Pacific Ocean via sewers, not through ocean dumping of DDT drums. The deep-water ocean disposal sites are approximately 20 miles distance from PV Shelf and at a depth of around 3000 feet.
- The work of EPA's Superfund Program to clean up PV Shelf and to protect the public and especially vulnerable communities from seafood potentially contaminated by DDT is proceeding apace on multiple fronts and continues to be a priority.
- Congressional Inquiries. Senator Feinstein, Congresswoman Barragan, Congressman Lieu, and Congressman Lowenthal expressed concerns regarding the human health and ecological impacts from the DDT disposed by Montrose in the deep-ocean disposal site identified in the LA Times article and urged EPA to act.

KEY POINTS:

- These deep-water sites, which are separate from the Palos Verdes Shelf, were examined by state and federal agencies such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the 1980's and 1990's. Based on recent scientific research conducted by the University of California and others, EPA believes that this issue should be examined again.
- NOAA and the Dept. of the Interior, as federal natural resource trustees, have important roles to play in comprehending the effects on the marine environment of this disposal. A Scripps Institute of Oceanography study, sponsored by NOAA, is currently underway to map a small portion of the ocean floor in the vicinity of one of the deep-water disposal sites.
- The State of California has not requested that the ocean dump sites be considered for listing as a Superfund Site on the EPA National Priorities List.

TALKING POINTS:

- Regarding the close-to-shore DDT impacts at the Palos Verdes Shelf site, while EPA develops a final cleanup plan, we have worked with local partners to implement extensive and highly successful measures to protect the public and especially vulnerable communities from the most imminent risks presented by consumption of contaminated seafood.
- Regarding the separate deep-water disposal locations, EPA is collaborating with state and federal agencies to convene a meeting once the NOAA and Scripps Institute study is complete to discuss these disposal locations, as well as the state's perspective on this issue.